

Consumer Connections Creates Certification Opportunities for Peers

Consumer Connections has designed its training curriculum to provide persons in recovery with the opportunity to secure up to four professional certifications. In partnership with *The Certification Board, an independent nonprofit professional human service certifying board based in NJ*, Consumer Connections established the **Certified Mental Health Assistant (CMHA)**, and the **Peer Specialist (PEER)** certifications.

The certifications require completion of a curriculum, supervised work experience, a supervised practicum, a required basic level of education (minimum of a GED), and life experience requirements, all of which are independently evaluated and approved by the certifying organization. In addition, there are two-year recertification requirements of additional training (24 hours of related course work).

- **[Community Mental Health Assistant \(CMHA\)](#)** – successful completion of 105 hours of coursework and 18 hours of WRAP training, a GED, and 500 hours of documented supervised paid or volunteer work in a mental health setting. There are currently 68 active CMHAs in NJ.
- **[Peer Specialist \(PEER\)](#)** – successful completion of 42 hours of course work, completion of 18 hours of WRAP training, and 200 hours of documented paid or volunteer work in a human service setting. There are currently 48 active PEERs in NJ (established in 2007).

These two certifications are complementary, with the PEER course work designed as applicable toward the CMHA certification. In addition, the completion of the CMHA course work, plus the completion of Consumer Connections Co-Occurring Specialty training of 36 hours, qualifies the individual to receive two nationally recognized, and reciprocal credentials: **[Chemical Dependency Associate \(CDA\)](#)** and **Co-occurring Disorders Associate (CODA)**.

These certifications provide excellent training for persons in recovery to perform a wide variety of peer- and non-peer-designed positions in the areas of case management, outreach, residential, and self-help services. They provide persons in recovery with recognized entry-level credentials as they begin to enter the peer workforce.

If you are interested in learning more about these four certifications go to www.certbd.org for complete information on all the certifications, or contact Consumer Connections at 1-800-367-8850 or Ray Cortese at rcortese@mhanj.org. Consumer Connections provides free consultation and technical support during the application process.

CMHA